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NUTRITION COMMITTEE NEWS

For exchange of information on nutrition education and school lunch activities.

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EXCHANGE OF NUTRITION INFORMATION THROUGH MEETINGS

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Meetings that bring interested people together for study and discussion have proved a good means of exchanging information. In this issue of NCN, three meetings are described which have common charactertics—comprehensive preplanning, organized procedures, and terminal evaluation. Each meeting had a somewhat different objective. One was a workshop for nutritionists and other workers to consider a specific nutrition education problem. Another was an institute to bring nutrition specialists the newest knowledge of nutrition and its implications for programming. The third was an institute planned for all disciplines involved in community nutrition.

KENTUCKY WORKSHOP ON WEIGHT CONTROL

Weight control—a persistent problem.—Weight control classes for overweight persons were conducted for several years in Kentucky with the approval of the State and county Medical Societies (NCN, Nov.-Dec. 1952). Each person attending such a class did so with the written approval of a physician.

In 1958, a study was made to measure, if possible, the success of these classes to ascertain whether they were worth the required staff time. It was found that a surprisingly good percentage of the participants had maintained a reduced weight over a 3-year period. However, it was decided that the entire program could be strengthened by workers sharing in the preparation of a guide for organizing and teaching weight control classes.

Such a guide would include a list of practical suggestions for organizing classes, an outline of subject matter, record forms, a bibliography, and ideas for measuring progress.

A workshop to study problem.—To develop the needed guide about 30 persons gathered at the University of Kentucky on August 10, 1959, for a 5-day workshop sponsored by Kentucky Cooperative Extension Work in Home Economics and Kentucky Department of Health. Extension service specialists, public health nutritionists, home demonstration agents, public health educators, public health nurses, and other allied health or educational personnel participated.

Planning early and continuous.—Members of the planning committee, made up of representatives from the Department of Health, State Extension Service, and the U.S. Public Health Service, started functioning in January 1959, and continued active over the next 8 months. Their responsibilities included such preplanning activities as publicizing the workshop, arranging for a meeting place, recruiting experts to present background on the various phases of the weight control problem, securing secretarial help, keeping work groups informed of each other's progress, collecting pertinent materials, and procuring references for the use of participants and staff during the workshop.

Program plans were reviewed between sessions and revised if necessary to insure effective use of time and resources—both material and human.

Participants pool talents.—Meetings convened at 7:30 a.m. with a general session at which background material was presented. About 9:30 a.m. the group had a short social period which was followed by planning session, progress reports, discussion of problems posed by the work groups, review of illustrative material such as films, or such activities as a demonstration class.

After an early lunch participants worked on special problems in 5 small groups. As each group completed some phase of its work, the draft was typed. At the next general session, typed materials were distributed to the entire group for consideration.

Effective planning pays.—By the last session, suggestions for organizing weight control groups had been compiled, a tentative outline of subject matter developed, materials assembled and classified, and record forms adopted. Participants planned to use the guide for 1 year or longer, after which in another workshop it would be reexamined and evaluated and necessary revisions would be considered.

In evaluating the workshop, the participants reported they had been dubious about such a large undertaking. However, as they became involved, the work progressed well and they were satisfied with their accomplishment. This was probably due to the careful organization developed by the planning committee.

A task for the future.—Techniques of evaluation which were discussed in the workshop will be used and the merits of each evaluated at the next workshop. Participants also decided that more work needs to be done in developing the bibliography, in assembling and evaluating teaching materials, and in developing audio-visual aids.

PENNSYLVANIA PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITION INSTITUTE

"Nutrition and the Life Cycle" was the theme of the institute for nutrition specialists sponsored by the University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public Health and the Pennsylvania Department of Health on June 8-13, 1958.

Planning began early.—Announcements were sent to nutritionists in Pennsylvania and elsewhere several months prior to the meeting. About 65 participants registered in advance. A fee of $30 covered the many expenses of the institute including salary for a stenotypist.

Group decisions were made and carried out. From detailed notes of the meeting summary proceedings were compiled. Extra copies of the Proceedings of the First Public Health Nutrition Institute are available from the Department of Biochemistry and Nutrition, Graduate School of Public Health, University of Pittsburgh, at $5 per copy.

Participants involved in program planning.—Nutritionists who signified their intention to participate were asked to indicate content and procedures that would be most profitable to them. The staff at the University of Pittsburgh arranged the program in the light of these responses which indicated that the meeting should have these 5 objectives:

(1) To look at man's nutrition in relationship to his total environment, biological, physical, and social;
(2) To visualize the life cycle as a progression, with each step dependent on the previous one;
(3) To review nutritional facts in light of new knowledge;
(4) To help participants evaluate their agency practice in terms of current nutritional needs;
(5) To list and promote the lines of research most important to public health workers.

Content and procedures.—Reports of research showing the importance of nutrition to each phase of the life cycle were presented by specialists. Attention was also given to application of this research to practical nutrition programs.

For example, one specialist pointed out that nutrition research continues to indicate the importance of adequate nutrition before conception as well as in pregnancy. He gave it meaning by suggesting that if mothers are nutritionally healthy at the time of conception and receive an adequate diet supported by sound medical guidance during pregnancy, the hazards of maternity can be reduced and the chances for strong, healthy babies increased.

A nutritionist then gave an account of agency practice showing how these research findings can be reflected in programming. She suggested that considering the early age at which girls are marrying and subsequently becoming mothers, nutrition programs for adolescents and teenagers should be given high priority.

Another specialist dealt with nutrition in infancy. This talk was followed by actual case presentations. Infants with feeding problems were brought in for observation followed by group discussion of such problems as how and when to introduce new foods into the baby's diet.

Intermissions promote communication.—Refreshment breaks gave participants an opportunity to discuss informally new ideas in the light of their individual background and experience. Both morning and afternoon intermissions of about 15 minutes each were scheduled.

Summary and evaluation.—The institute was concluded with a speech summarizing the material presented in terms of conference objectives.

Informal comments received indicated that participants found the institute helpful in their work. Responses on an evaluation form participants completed will be extremely valuable in planning the Second Nutrition Institute to be held June 5-10, 1960.

HAWAII NUTRITION INSTITUTE

The Hawaii Dietetic Association, the University of Hawaii, and the State Department of Health cosponsored the first State Nutrition Institute on August 20 to 22, 1959. Its purpose was to extend knowledge of the newer developments in the science of nutrition and in the techniques of teaching nutrition among all professional personnel concerned with practical nutrition programs.

Planning began in February 1958, when the Hawaii Dietetic Association proposed the institute. Co-chairmen were appointed from the University of Hawaii and the State Health Department's Bureau of Nutrition.

Needs, interest, preferences surveyed first.—A steering committee of three representing these organizations gathered information on institutes and workshops. A questionnaire, sent to dietitians, home economists, dental hygienists, teachers, and public health nurses, furnished information concerning (1) interest in an institute; (2) subject matter desired; (3) length of institute; (4) fees; and (5) possible date for the meeting. The tabulated information provided a basis for planning the institute.

Developing plans for the meeting.—Then a planning committee took over. Its members served as chairmen of subcommittees responsible for the program, finances, arrangements, printing, exhibits, registration, and hospitality. Every effort was made to have participation from all disciplines.

Invitations were extended to personnel in all areas involved in community nutrition education. Participants included a research nutritionist, a professor of health education, a psychologist, an anthropologist, and a sociologist as well as local biochemists, nutritionists, home economists, health educators, psychiatric nurses, social workers, and physicians.

Registration blanks with a mimeographed program were sent out a month prior to the institute. A registration deadline was set at 4 days before the opening date. More than two-thirds of the registrations came in before the deadline. The total registration was over 300. About 120 persons attended the smallest session.

A fee of $5 covered attendance at 5 half-day sessions, coffee breaks, and a copy of the full proceedings. For those who did not attend all sessions, a fee of $1 per session was charged. Extra copies of the proceedings will be available at $1.50. These charges proved low and extra funds had to be solicited. The necessary support came from voluntary health agencies, a local foundation with special interest in health, the State Health Department, and the Hawaii Dietetic Association.

Participants and public alerted.—The Nurses Bulletin and the Hawaii Medical Journal carried advance notice of the institute. A brief announcement was sent to local newspapers in advance. Feature stories on the visitors and local leaders in nutrition and health education appeared in morning and afternoon papers a week ahead. Radio and TV interviews, the week of the institute, spread sound nutrition information to the public.

Public included.—The public was invited to attend a panel discussion on food fads and how to combat them. Particular attention was given to the consumers' point of view in relation to food fads and to vitamin pills—their costs, ingredients, dangers, and values.

Conference procedures.—Two sessions were held each day—one on nutrition and the other on nutrition and health education. At each session visiting specialists presented an important aspect of their major interest. Local leaders then made applications to local situations—a procedure which necessitated a preliminary planning session with visiting specialists in order that a correlated presentation might be made.

For example, one specialist discussed understanding motivation in relation to helping people improve food habits. The participants then divided into groups of about 10 to discuss with local leaders application of the specialist's ideas to specific situations in which changes in food habits were indicated. Highlights of each group discussion were reported to the reconvened group.

A period of 30-45 minutes was allotted for questions and discussion at the close of each session.

Varied teaching methods demonstrated.—Lectures, some illustrated with slides, treated such subjects as the interrelationships of vitamins and hormones, dietary fat and heart disease, and space nutrition.

A panel discussion dealt with cultural food patterns and changing food habits. A psychologist, an anthropologist, and a sociologist served as the panel.

Exhibits showed ways of conserving the nutritional value of guava in cooking and examples of foods in the diets of the various ethnic groups in Hawaii. A display of the many educational materials available for distribution to the public was another useful feature.

Participants evaluated meeting.—At the close of the institute, evaluation forms were distributed and were completed by about one-half of those in attendance. A summary report is being prepared by the program committee.

Looking ahead.—A full documented report of the institute will be placed in the State Archives for use as a reference in future planning. Requests for a repetition indicate that the participants found the first meeting of

value. Periodic nutrition institutes on a 5-year basis are being considered.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Reports of the activities of committees planning meetings reveal unanimity of opinion concerning:

(1) Necessity for careful and comprehensive preplanning in order that meetings are meaningful and helpful to participants and that good use is made of time and resources;

(2) Importance of involving participants in planning the program to meet the needs of the group;

(3) Value of using varied educational approaches to add vitality and to maintain interest;

(4) Importance of promoting good communication among participants,—encouraging them to share their individual background experience as it relates to the topic under discussion;

(5) Need to evaluate meetings in terms of objectives as a basis for planning subsequent meetings.

Descriptions of many meetings show that much time and effort have been successfully expended on developing meetings with the first four points in mind. Further study is needed in the area of evaluation. Although those concerned agree that meetings should be evaluated, reports that mention distribution and completion of evaluation forms give little about their content or how the forms have been used, their proven value, and how they might be improved.

Usually, a questionnaire constitutes the terminal evaluation of a meeting. Wording questions for individuals to answer which will measure the value of a meeting to a group is difficult because of the range of background experience to be found among participants and the variety of individual needs to be met.

The value of a meeting to an individual may be learned to some extent by simply encouraging participants to pause and consider the meeting in terms of individual experience and needs. Tabulation of individual opinions may be difficult to relate to the group in the form of specific objectives but may provide direction for future group activity. Thus, it would seem that terminal evaluation, inadequate though it may be, has merit.

Some groups have found that further direction for future planning can be obtained from such post-meeting evaluations as that made of the Nutrition Education Conference, April 1957 (NCN Sept.-Oct. 1958). A questionnaire, submitted some 10 months after the meeting, was completed by slightly more than one-half of the conference participants. Responses revealed that during this time information gained at the conference had been used, plans had been made to apply conference ideas to local situations, and some ideas had been tested in communities.

TO OUR READERS

We welcome suggestion for topics you would like to see covered in NCN that would promote exchange of information in the area of nutrition education and school lunch. We believe a good way to do this is to include in NCN articles on timely topics well illustrated with activities that have been tested successfully in actual community or school situations.

In the past we have requested, for possible publication, descriptions of activities to illustrate such topics, and you, our readers, have been generous in your response. Sometimes we are unable to use the material because too few details are provided to be helpful to other workers who might wish to profit by your experience.

Our readers find stories helpful when they include: (1) Some of the reasoning or events which prompted initiation of the activity; (2) an account of procedure detailed enough so that others could follow it or adapt it to their needs; (3) types of resource persons, if any, who contributed help; (4) why those concerned considered the activity worthwhile; (5) suggestions, if any, for possible improvement.

We are interested in details but it is not necessary to submit a polished account of the work. If we can use it, it can be polished as we weave your description into the finished article. A copy of the portion dealing with your story will be sent for approval before being used.

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